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ABSTRACT

This is a summary in outline form of the English literature teaching situation in Pakistan. As a legacy of British rule, officially all instruction is in English, but a great deal is carried on in Urdu or provincial languages. Attachment to English language and literature is still strong among the educated elite. This contrasts with the attitudes of some sections of the middle and professional classes who resent the use of English and the continuing British legacy. Within the educational system, English literature is strongly entrenched and only little progress has been made towards more practical and realistic English language teaching. If English is to survive in Pakistan, other than as the language of the elite, it is essential that the standards of English teaching in the schools be raised by the training of more and better English language teachers. In Urdu-medium schools English is taught as a compulsory subject from classes 6 to 8 in the middle/ junior schools (age 11-14) and as an elective in the secondary schools (age 14-16). In the English-medium schools English is taught from class 1 (age 6). English is compulsory in all higher secondary schools, intermediate colleges, and degree-granting colleges and universities. (Author/CFL)

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING PROFILE

Literature Annex - PAKISTAN

October 1976

## 1. Status of Literature

Indicate whether English Literature is regarded as a native or a kindred literature, a major imported literature, a foreign literature to be studied for its own sake, a part of language teaching, or various combinations of these including indications of purely negative status if it is largely unknown or is viewed with suspicion.

1.1 At different educational and social levels all of the above attitudes to English Literature can be found in Pakistan as a legacy of British rule in the Subcontinent. Attachment to English language and literature is still strong among the educated elite, especially in those families with a tradition of government service and English-medium education. This contrasts with the more chauvinistic attitudes of some sections of the less westernised middle and professional classes who resent the use of English and the continuing British legacy. As knowledge of English is still essential for social, educational and professional advancement, it is resented by many persons from the lower levels of society who see it as an insuperable barrier to personal success and social change.

1.2 Within the educational system, English literature is strongly entrenched and only little progress has been made towards more practical and realistic English language teaching. The rapid expansion of the universities has undermined the earlier assumption that those students proceeding to university studies would be proficient in English; and that the emphasis in the teaching of English could be almost exclusively on literature. Literature continues to hold its own because of a strong sense of its higher dignity and a reluctance on the part of most teachers to apply themselves to the mundane practice of teaching remedial or functional English.

1.3 If English is to survive in Pakistan, other than as the language of a self-proliferating elite, it is essential that standards of teaching of English in schools be raised by the training of more and better English language teachers. This can only be achieved by a radical reform of the objectives, methodologies and materials of English language teaching in the educational system, particularly at Teacher Training College and University level, where it will largely be at the expense of the English Literature tradition.

## 2. Literary Education

2.1 Age at which children are first taught English Literature in state schools, either in the context of ELT or as an independent study.

2.1.1 Urdu-Medium Schools English is taught as a compulsory subject from Class VI-VIII in the middle/junior schools (age 11-14)

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Among the aims and objectives of teaching English published by the Ministry of Education (Elementary English Curriculum, 1973) are a. "to read structural supplementary readers with interest and confidence" b. "to recite poems with intonation and modulations". The syllabus for Class VIII under Reading gives the objective "to develop ability of reading supplementary material for information and enjoyment". Reference is also made to the use of plays, songs and poems.

2.1.2 In Urdu-Medium secondary schools (Classes IX-X, age group 14- 16), the English Curriculum, 1976 , published by the Ministry of Education, makes the following comments:

> "In pre-Independence days the emphasis was placed on proficiency in English as a literary instrument. Now English is needed primarily as a functional language for comprehension and expression for non-literary uses. This should not, however, be construed to mean that the study of English language in its aesthetic, non-utilitarian dimensions is not needed."
>
> One of the objectives of reading is "to enable pupils to read prose and poetry for appreciation and pleasure."
>
> ".... extensive reading is to cultivate taste for general reading."

2.1.3 Instructions regarding textbooks include:

> "projecting triumphs of human spirit and knowledge in art, science and culture."
>
> "creating aesthetic sense among the students to give them insight into the beauties of the world of imagination and fancy in fiction and poetry."

2.1.4 It is prescribed that 50% of the two textbooks for secondary school compulsory English should be devoted to descriptive expository and discursive prose, narrative prose and verse. Selected poems for inclusion in the textbooks are specified (by Masefield, Longfellow, Kipling, Tennyson etc).

2.1.5 At the secondary school level, students may also elect to take English Literature as a separate subject (depending "upon local needs and resources"). (See under 2.4.2 for prescribed books). Students are expected to be familiar with literary forms and terms.

2.1.6 It is clear from the above that some literary appreciation is meant to be taught from the earliest stages of English language learning and English literature is not considered solely in the context of ELT. Much of the non-literary reading material prescribed in the teaching of English is designed as a vehicle for the teaching of Islamic ideals and general knowledge.

2.1.7 English-Medium Schools English is taught from Class I (age 6). Standards are obviously much higher at the secondary school level. The official objectives of English teaching at this level are the same as in Urdu-medium schools although "the standard of achievement and performance shall obviously be a little advanced" (Karachi Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education).

2.1.8 Students in English-medium secondary schools normally take a compulsory advanced English course similar in most respects, set books etc, to the elective English Literature course in Urdu-medium secondary schools.

2.1.9 A number of the more prestigious private and nationalised English-medium schools have streams in which students are prepared for British GCE examinations.

2.2 Describe the Literature content in examinations at O and A level equivalents, and state whether UK based examinations are taken in state system or elsewhere.

2.2.1 The Secondary School Certificate examination in compulsory English, taken after Class X (age 16) involves comprehension questions on one stanza of poetry and on prescribed text books. The examination on elective English Literature includes questions on poetry, a set novel, a set play, and essays and short stories.

2.2.2 The equivalent to the British A level examination is the Intermediate examination taken after Class XII (age 18). English is a compulsory subject at all higher secondary schools/intermediate colleges (Classes XI - XII). Students who have passed their Secondary School Certificate examination from English-Medium Schools may opt for the Urdu Alternative Easy examination if they take an English Advanced examination. Although also examined on "functional English", their set books are literary (see under 2.4.3).

2.2.3 Questions in the English Compulsory examination involve explanation of a passage of poetry with reference to the context; paraphrase of a text passage; comments on characters and plots of two one act plays and a novel.

2.2.4 In the English Advanced examination one of the two papers is devoted to English Literature (poetry, drama, essays and a novel).

2.2.5 The curriculum for Intermediate examinations specifies:

> "Emphasis is to be laid on straight forward 20th Century prose in the form of selections including topics from the fields of history, geography, civics, current affairs, science and technology as well as from literature."
>
> "There is a case for restricting vocabulary to the 5,000 words limit, though this is not essential if the selections are made in the full awareness of the desirability of avoiding difficult English."
>
> "Modern prose one-act plays of intrinstic interest and providing models of good conversational English. Both prose and plays to be studied for language and content rather than style. If the right choice is made there should be no need to differentiate in prose and plays, between the needs of Pre-Arts, Pre-Science, Pre-Commerce, Pre-Medical and Pre-Engineering students."
>
> "Chiefly short poems of a lyrical and narrative nature, some selections from longer poems, including twentieth century poetry but excluding poems offering any serious difficulty in language."

2.2.6 British GCE 'O' and 'A' level examinations are prepared for and taken by selected students in a number of English-medium secondary and higher secondary schools.

2.3 Is there a professional association of teachers of English. Indicate its literary activity and any Council involvement.

There are no professional associations of teachers of English except for a small group of teachers in Karachi. There has been some recent interest shown in attempting to start a professional association.

2.4 Literature textbooks most widely used; whether simplified, abridged; indicate school-leaving standards.

2.4.1 Textbooks for the secondary school level are produced by the provincial textbook boards. As indicated under 2.1.4., these should have a literature component. The Ministry of Education has recommended only two textbooks for use in compulsory English up to Secondary School Certificate level (English Curriculum, 1976). Until now, however, the provincial Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) have prescribed two Secondary Stage English books, together with one or more set readers (Poems for Young People, Stories of Modern Adventure).

2.4.2 For secondary school elective English Literature, the curriculum prescribes an anthology of poems (such as More Poems for Young People, Oxford University Press, Lahore); an abridged version of a novel (such as Great Expectations, Abridged Series, Longmans); a play (such as The Winslow Boy; OUP); and an anthology of essays and short stories. Oxford University Press in Pakistan has undertaken publication of a number of such anthologies and abridged readers, some of which are essentially local productions eg Tom Brown's Schooldays, Little Women, Seven Stories by H G Wells, Pioneers of Medicine, Six Physicists.

2.4.3 At higher secondary school/intermediate college level the standard texts (subject to the stipulations given under 2.2.5) are:

| | Compulsory English | English Advanced |
|---|---|---|
| | Intermediate English Bks I-II<br>Living English Structure<br>(for extensive reading only) | |
| Drama | Two One-Act Plays | Drinkwater: Abraham Lincoln<br>(OUP Plays Retold) |
| Novel | The Prisoner of Zenda | Far from the Madding Crowd<br>(Macmillan World Classics) |
| | | English Essays of Today |
| Verse | Selections from English Verse | The Magic Casement (Verse) |

2.4.4 Despite the traditional emphasis placed on English Literature (as described under 2.1) and the reticence of the educational authorities to jettison literature in favour of "functional English", the teaching of English Literature suffers from the general deterioration in the teaching of English and the lowered standards of English that can be expected of the average learner in a rapidly expanding student population. Although represented in

the syllabus and set books, English Literature, especially at the higher secondary level (and even for those students from English-medium schools) does not involve the reading of unabridged texts or a wide selection of books. There is widespread resentment among the student population that English should be a compulsory subject and necessary for success at higher educational levels and in public life thereafter. It is a common cause of complaint at degree college and university level that students proceeding from secondary education are linguistically ill-equipped to undertake tertiary level English-medium education.

2.5 Percentage of undergraduates studying some English; percentage specialising in English.

All students in degree colleges and universities must take a compulsory English course and tertiary level instruction is in English in all subjects except other languages. As compulsory English and elective English can be taken together to count as two subjects out of the three required for the BA Degree, a large percentage of Arts students opt for elective English. It is estimated that 3-4% of all undergraduates take elective English.

2.6 Organisation of degree courses in Literature (ie whether chronological or genre based etc); periods of literature substantically covered; depth of study at finals level (eg how much would a student have read?).

2.6.1 Compulsory BA English The universities of Karachi and Peshawar now have compulsory English courses for BA Degrees with reduced literature components. In Karachi the reading component consists of selections of largely non-literary modern English prose. In Peshawar, since 1975, the literature element has been appreciably reduced to the study of an anthology of prose and one novel (Steinbeck: The Pearl) for mainly ELT purposes.

2.6.2 The University of the Punjab in Lahore has retained a strong literature element in the BA compulsory English course. Two of the three examination papers are based largely on literary texts: those on prose consisting of Jane Eyre and anthologies of prose; essays and short stories; on drama and poetry, Shaw: The Devil's Disciple and anthologies of verse and short plays.

2.6.3 Given the low standards and extraordinarily high failure rate of students in BA compulsory English, the study of English literature must be superficial and uncritical for all but the best students with either English-medium secondary education or a particular interest in literature.

2.6.4 Elective BA English The BA elective English courses in universities are exclusively literature based. Examinations are genre based. Shakespeare, Shaw, pre-romatic and romantic poetry and the nineteenth century novel with a very thin scattering of twentieth century authors represent the main emphasis.

| KARACHI | LAHORE | PESHAWAR |
|---|---|---|
| Paper I: Fiction, Prose & Poetry | Paper A: Prose | Paper A: Prose |
| Jane Eyre | Anthology of Prose | Lord of the Flies |
| Addison: Coverley Papers | Anthology of Short Stories | Passage to India |
| Palgrave Golden Treasury (prescribed poems up to 1798) | Tess of the D'Urbervilles | Anthology of Prose |
| Evans: A Short History of English Literature | The Apple Cart | |
| Paper II: Drama & Poetry | Paper B: Poetry & Drama | Paper B: Poetry & Drama |
| Othello | Much Ado about Nothing | Twelfth Night |
| The Apple Cart | Julius Caesar | Bolt: A Man for all Seasons |
| Palgrave Golden Treasury (Prescribed poems after 1798 - the only 20th Century poems included are by Hardy (2), Owen (1), Lawrence (1), Eliot (1) & Larkin (1).) | Fifteen Poets (Poems by Spenser, Dryden, Milton, Pope, & Cowper prescribed) | Selected Poems |
| Evans: A short history of English Literature | | |

2.6.5 As will be seen from the above lists, the amount of prescribed reading is not considerable. It is unlikely that many students would read extensively outside the syllabus.

2.7 Principles and structures of postgraduate degrees; research capabilities of national or university libraries.

2.7.1 The organisation of studies at postgraduate level varies from university to university. Basically, a BA pass is followed by one year of study to BA Honours and one further year for the MA. As far as English is concerned, however, there are local variations. The University of the Punjab retains the 2 + 1 + 1 system. The University of Peshawar does not have a BA honours degree and the 2 year elective English BA pass is followed by a 2 year MA.

2.7.2 Universities in Pakistan are being encouraged to adopt the semester system with continuous assessment. This has been introduced in the University of Karachi which has been able to combine it with a rather complicated system of staggered degrees. Good students can transfer after the first year of the elective English BA pass course to the first year of the 2 year BA Honours course and from the first year of the BA Honours course to the prelininary or 'previous' year for the MA, completed by a second final year. A progression, degree by degree, which would normally take 6 years can thusebe reduced to 4 years of study.

2.7.3 The syllabi for postgraduate English studies are largely genre-based with chronological progression within the genre and chronological study of the history of English Literature. There is relatively little twentieth century literature (Strachey, Russell, Forster,

Lawrence, Woolf, Eliot, Yeats, Huxley), although the inclusion of American literature (usually with American professors to teach it) tends to redress the balance. At MA level individual poems and novels etc are still prescribed and assessment is largely by examination.

2.7.4 There are very few facilities for research and no source materials. There is no national library and university libraries are inadequate. The only possible lines of research are social linguistics or phonetics. All other work can only be interpretive. Most university teachers with PhDs have studied abroad.

## 3. Literary Scene

3.1 A statement on the status of the mother-tongue literature(s); whether taught in schools; and whether local writer's work in English.

3.1.1 Urdu, although the official language of Pakistan, is the mother tongue of only a small proportion of the population and is a literary rather than everyday language. The languages of everyday communication are largely the numerous provincial languages and dialects eg Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto. Urdu is taught in all schools and is generally understood, but real enthusiasm and familiarity with Urdu is limited to the middle and professional classes. At the highest educational professional and social levels of society, many people feel more at home with English and their use of Urdu is heavily laced with English expressions for which Urdu has no equivalents. Even in those sections of society in which literary Urdu is strong, there can be considerable competition from literary Pashto and Sindhi.

3.1.2 There does not seem to be any considerable output of Urdu literature or any outstanding names. Most of the better-known Urdu novelists and short story writers belong to the Pre-Independence generation. Current literary activity in Urdu is most apparent in poetry, to which Urdu is perhaps better-adapted, although it is circumscribed by strong formal traditions. There are also some writers of satiric dramas (the influence of George Bernard Shaw is said to be still dominant.)

3.1.3 As far as writing in English is concerned there has likewise been a dearth of novelists or short story writers, although there are a number of good poets.

3.2 An assessment of the range and quality of translations of British literature into the vernacular, as compared with other foreign literature, extent of local publishing of British literature and/or local writing in English.

3.2.1 Most work on the translation of English literature into Urdu was carried out before Independence and was largely associated with the Bureau of Translation established by the Nizam of Hyderabad in 1928. There were translations of Shakespeare, Dickens, Maugham, as well as of Maupassant, Pushkin and other famous writers in other languages but these appeared mainly in literary magazines and not in book form. More recent translations have been for radio and television.

3.2.2 The main sources of English literature in translation today are the Russians and Chinese Foreign Language Publishing Houses, who produce books at very low price in either Urdu or English.

3.2.3 Local publishing of English Literature is mainly in the hands of the Oxford University Press in Pakistan. Because of the limited market most writers in English publish their work in university and literary magazines or seek publication abroad.

3.3 Availability of literature texts in libraries and bookshops.

3.3.1 Imported books are very expensive because of the shortage of foreign exchange and the high mark-up. The range of literature in English in bookshops follows no apparent pattern. There is usually a lot of popular fiction in paperback editions with an irregular sprinkling of Penguin modern classics and bound editions of Victorian classics.

3.3.2 Libraries in Pakistan are very poorly organised and lack funds. The British Council libraries in Pakistan, with a total stock of over 170,000 volumes, fulfil an important role.

3.3.3 A National Book Foundation has been established to produce cheap editions of textbooks for students but these are not necessarily cheaper than the cheapest imported editions. There has been a recent influx of very cheap Russian and Chinese books in English.

Diagram to illustrate the general pattern of English teaching in Pakistan